

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----151347Z 090091 /42

O R 151308Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4688
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 DAR ES SALAAM 1548

EXDIS

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, RH, XA, US
SUBJECT: ROBERT MUGABE'S REACTION TO OWEN'S PROPOSALS

REF: A) STATE 82018, B) DAR ES SALAAM 1498

1. SUMMARY. I MET WITH ROBERT MUGABE APRIL 14 TO AFFIRM US SUPPORT FOR UK FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN'S CURRENT EFFORTS ON RHODESIAN PROBLEM. MUGABE WAS WARY OF CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE IDEA, AS HE HAD BEEN WITH OWEN. HE DID NOT CONCENTRATE ON QUESTION OF US PARTICIPATION IN THE CONFERENCE, BUT RATHER ON THE NEED FOR MORE DETAILS ON SUBSTANTIVE ASPECTS OF PROPOSED CONSTITUTION AND ON WHAT UK AND US WERE PREPARED TO DO TO IMPLEMENT. HE CLEARLY REMAINS SUSPICIOUS OF WESTERN MOTIVES BUT INDICATED WILLINGNESS EXPLORE IDEA FURTHER. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCOMPANIED BY POLITICAL OFFICER DAVID HALSTED, I HAD HOUR'S CONVERSATION WITH ROBERT MUGABE APRIL 14. WITH MUGABE WAS ZANU ASSOCIATE SIMON MUZENDA, WHO TOOK CAREFUL NOTES AND
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INTERVENED IN THE DISCUSSION OCCASIONALLY AND MILDLY. I BEGAN BY ASSURING MUGABE THAT THE US HAD BEEN CLOSELY INVOLVED IN CONSULTATIONS WITH DR. OWEN AND FULLY SUPPORTED HIS AFRICAN TRIP AND THE IDEAS HE WAS PUTTING FORTH. I STRESSED THAT CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE WAS A NEW DEPARTURE FROM GENEVA EFFORTS AT ESTABLISHING INTERIM GOVERNMENT, CITING ITS ADVANTAGES AS SET FORTH REF A. PROPOSAL WAS VERY MUCH IN FORMATIVE STAGE AND NOTHING OWEN --

OR ANY OF THE REST OF US -- SAID WAS CAST IN CONCRETE. THE US WOULD CONSULT AGAIN WITH UK AFTER DR. OWEN'S TRIP AND WANTED TO BE HELPFUL IN ANY WAY AGREEABLE TO ALL THE PARTIES. WE WERE INFORMING OTHER AFRICAN AND ZIMBABWE NATIONALIST LEADERS OF ABOVE. THEIR REACTIONS, TOGETHER WITH MUGABE'S, WOULD HELP DETERMINE NEXT STAGE.

3. DURING COURSE OF MEETING, MUGABE PRESSED HARD ON SPECIFICS OF WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN: WHAT WOULD THE CONSTITUTION COVER? HOW WOULD THE CONFERENCE BE CALLED? WHO WOULD ATTEND? WHAT ROLE DID THE UK AND THE US INTEND TO PLAY? HE WANTED TO KNOW JUST WHAT US AND UK HAD ALREADY AGREED TO. HE REPEATEDLY RETURNED TO THIS POINT SAYING THAT EITHER YOU HAVE AGREED TO NOTHING AND IT ALL MEANS NOTHING, OR, AS HE BELIEVED, BOTH OWEN AND I WERE WITHHOLDING DETAILS FROM HIM. I REPEATED THAT EVERYTHING WAS FORMATIVE; THE ONLY SPECIFICS I KNEW OF ON WHICH WE AND THE BRITISH AGREED WERE "ONE MAN ONE VOTE" AND THAT CONSTITUTIONAL FORMS WOULD PRESUMABLY FOLLOW THOSE OF WESTMINSTER.

4. ON US ROLE MUGABE ASKED IF US WOULD HAVE A "DIRECT PRESENCE IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM". WOULD IT BE "A PARTY TO ANY AGREEMENT THAT MIGHT BE REACHED?" OR WOULD THERE BE ASSURANCE THAT US WOULD USE "DEFINITE PRESSURE ON SMITH, DIRECT OR INDIRECT, TO GAIN HIS ACCEPTANCE OF CONSTITUTION"? HE WANTED TO KNOW WHAT STEPS US WOULD TAKE TO ENSURE IMPLEMENTATION OF CONFERENCE DECISIONS EMBODIED IN A CONSTITUTION ENDORSED BY UK PARLIAMENT. WHAT WOULD US DO IF SMITH REJECTED THE CONSTITUTION OR IF HE RETREATED ON AN AGREEMENT?

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5. MUGABE HAD UNDERSTOOD FROM OWEN THAT US WOULD USE "ALL POSSIBLE PRESSURE" TO SEE THAT CONSTITUTION WAS ACHIEVED. OWEN SEEMED "SO OPTIMISTIC". OWEN HAD SPOKEN OF USE OF US POWER AGAINST SMITH IF SMITH REFUSED COOPERATE. YET , SAID MUGABE, US WAS UNWILLING CONFIRM JUST HOW THIS WOULD BE DONE. US WAS ALSO UNWILLING TELL HIM EXACTLY WHAT IT WASGOING TO DO EVEN IN TERMS ITS ROLE IN CONFERENCE. HE COULDN'T AFFORD TO BECOME INVOLVED IN ANOTHER "TALKING OPERATION" A LA GENEVA.

6. I SAID I BELIEVED US HAD MADE CLEAR BASICS THAT WERE ESSENTIAL NOW. WE WERE PREPARED TO GO SO FAR AS TO COSPONSOR AND FULLY PARTICIPATE IN CONFERENCE -- IF ALL PARTIES WANTED IT. WE WOULD USE OUR POWER TO HELP IMPLEMENT. IN RESPONSE TO REPEATED EFFORTS GET FROM ME FLAT STATEMENT ON WHETHER OR NOT US WOULD USE TROOPS TO ENFORCE IMPLEMENTATION, WE FINALLY AGREED THAT SITUATION WAS THIS: OWEN HAD RULED OUT USE OF BRITISH TROOPS; HE HAD SAID HE DIDN'T THINK US CONGRESS WOULD PERMIT USE AMERICAN TROOPS, BUT USG HAD "NOT YET RULED OUT" THIS POSSIBILITY.

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INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 DAR ES SALAAM 1548

EXDIS

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

7. I THEN ASKED MUGABE TO CONSIDER THE PROBLEM IN ANOTHER WAY. THERE WERE TWO QUESTIONS: (A) WAS THE US FULLY COMMITTED TO INDEPENDENCE AND MAJORITY RULE FOR ZIMBABWE? (B) HOW WOULD IT USE ITS POWER TO PROMOTE THIS? HE HAD AN UNEQUIVOCAL "YES" TO THE FIRST QUESTION. THE SECOND HAD NOT YET BEEN DECIDED. IT WOULD BE CONFIRMED IN THE COURSE OF THE PROCESS OWEN WAS PROPOSING. THE QUESTION OF PRESSURING SMITH MIGHT NOT ARISE. HE MIGHT SEE THAT HE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO YIELD BEFORE A WIDELY-APPROVED CONSTITUTION. FURTHER, THERE WERE TACTICAL PROBLEMS IN SAYING AHEAD OF TIME WHAT WE INTENDED TO DO.

8. MUGABE ASKED IF I WAS AWARE THAT IF UK PASSES LEGISLATION IN ZIMBABWE'S INDEPENDENCE ON BASIS OF CONSTITUTION IT COULD THEN DUCK ALL FURTHER RESPONSIBILITY. BRITAIN COULD THEREFORE USE CONSTITUTION AS A MEANS OF GETTING RID OF RHODESIA PROBLEM. I SAID THIS MIGHT BE TECHNICALLY POSSIBLE BUT SERIOUSLY DOUBTED BRITAIN WOULD CHOOSE SUCH A COMPLICATED ROUTE WHEN IT COULD HAVE WASHED ITS HANDS OF RHODESIA AT ANY OF SEVERAL POINTS IN THE PAST.

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9. IN SUMMING UP, MUGABE SAID ZIMBABWE CAUSE MIGHT FIND
ITSELF IN ANOTHER "USELESS EXERCISE". HE SAID, "WE HAVE PROMISES
OF THE VAGUEST NATURE. WE ARE INTERESTED IN ASSESSING THE MEASURES
TO BE TAKEN TO ENFORCE A CONSTITUTIONAL SETTLEMENT. IF THE MEASURES
ARE NOT THERE, IF THE UK SAYS IT CAN'T ENFORCE IT, WE MUST QUESTION
THE WISDOM OF PARTICIPATING IN A CONSTITUTIONAL EXERCISE."
MUGABE ENDED BY AGAIN STRESSING HIS NEED FOR DETAIL ON US
INVOLVEMENT AND SUBSTANTIVE ASPECTS OF THE PROPOSAL. HIS FINAL
REMARK WAS THAT HE WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION TO ANY PROPOSAL THAT
HAD OBJECTIVE OF GENUINE INDEPENDENCE FOR ZIMBABWE.
SPAIN

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